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THE
CAMBRO-BRITON.

MAY, 1820.

NULLI QUIDEM MIHI SATIS ERUDITI VIDENTUR, QUIBUS
NOSTRA IGNOTA SUNT. CICERO *de Legibus.*

WELSH LANGUAGE.

—o—
MODERN LETTERS AND THEIR MUTATIONS.

THE last Essay under this head was devoted to some account of the old Bardic Alphabet, which was considered necessary in order to prepare the way for that examination of the modern Welsh Letters, without which no satisfactory view can be taken of the more general characteristics of the language. Indeed it has been the principal aim of the writer to proceed, with a proper regard to method, in this interesting investigation, analysing, as it were, in his progress, the ingredients, of which our venerable tongue is composed. And, if, in so doing, he may have incurred the imputation of tediousness or insipidity, he hopes some atonement may be found in his anxious desire to impart a full and accurate knowledge of the basis, as well as the superstructure, of the Welsh language. And this can only be done by commencing, as has been attempted in these Essays, with an elementary examination of its first principles; for there is no royal road to language any more than to mathematics. Yet it may be satisfactory to those, who are impatient to become acquainted with the more interesting features of this subject, to be informed, that the inquiry, begun in this Essay, will be the last of those, which may be termed rudimental.

It can not now be accurately ascertained how soon the Roman letters, in their modern form, were first adapted to the Welsh language; but it appears indisputable, that they did not immediately succeed to the old Bardic symbols. For we find from some of the most ancient MSS. now extant*, that the language

* Among these is the Llandav Gospel, commonly called St. Chad's Gospel, preserved in the Cathedral at Litchfield, which contains some

was at that time generally written in a character resembling the Saxon, from which it has been very plausibly inferred, that the Saxons, who confessedly brought no letters with them here, adopted those, which they found in use on their arrival *. And it is by no means improbable, that an intercourse of more than four centuries with the Romans had served, if not to occasion a total discontinuance of the Bardic Alphabet, at least to introduce such innovations into it, as to render the letters used by the Britons, at the close of their connection with that people, not very dissimilar from those which we find in the early Saxon MSS. From that period to the invention of printing various fluctuations may be supposed to have taken place: and, indeed, it appears, from some Welsh writings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries †, that the character, erroneously called Saxon, was not at that time in use in Wales. Yet, as before observed, we have not now any means of discovering at what precise period this revolution began; although it may be presumed, that the invention of printing mainly contributed to its establishment. And from that

marginal memorials of donations to the Church of Llandav, written partly in Latin, and partly in Welsh, and in the Saxon character. Mr. E. Llwyd, in his *Archæologia Britannica* (pp. 5 and 226), has given an extract or two from these: and at the time he wrote (1707) he computed the age of the MS. at eleven hundred years. He likewise enumerates three or four other MSS, in which the Welsh language is written in the same character, particularly the "Poem of Juvencus" at Cambridge, which he considered to be a Pictish or Cumbrian MS. of the ninth century. *Arch. Brit.* p. 226.

* Most writers on this subject admit, that the Saxons had no knowledge of letters on their first invasion of this country; but the question at issue seems to be, whether they borrowed their alphabet from the natives at that time, or afterwards from the Continent. The former seems by much the most probable, allowing, as we must, that the use of letters was, at the time, generally known to the Britons. Among other proofs of this fact is the existence of some monumental inscriptions in Wales, written not very long after the Saxon conquest, in a mixed Roman and British character.—One of the oldest MSS. written in the Saxon language and character, of which we have any account, is perhaps that, of which Dr. Smith takes notice in his Edition of Bede, and which he supposes to have been as old as that writer, and consequently written about three centuries after the settlement of the Saxons in Britain.

† The *Llyr Du o Gaerdyddin*, or Black Book of Caermarthen, in the Hengwrt Library, is one of the oldest Welsh MSS. extant in the modern character. This Mr. Llwyd (*Arch. Brit.* p. 225) supposes to have been written in the time of Cyddelw the Poet, who flourished about 1150. See also the *Cambrian Register*, Vol. 3, p. 288.

epoch to the present time some changes have taken place in particular letters, which will be noticed in the sequel. It now becomes necessary to proceed to the particular objects of the present inquiry, which are to examine in the first place the nature of the modern letters with reference to their capacity for expressing their assumed powers, and afterwards to endeavour to explain those mutations of the initial consonants, which form so remarkable a feature of the Welsh tongue.

It has already been stated, that the Bardic Alphabet comprised three and forty characters, each representing a distinct sound. And, although all these sounds are still retained in the language, the modern letters, employed to designate them, are but twenty-eight; a circumstance of itself sufficient to denote their inadequacy to the proposed end. But even of this number a few have no analogy with the articulations they were designed to convey, the powers, which custom has appropriated to them, being entirely arbitrary. And it cannot be denied, that a blind continuance in this abuse has presented one of the main obstacles to strangers in their study of the Welsh tongue, whilst it has also been productive of another disadvantage, which will be particularised heræafter *. To prove what has been now affirmed, a list of the Welsh letters is here subjoined, together with an explanation of their respective sounds, both independently, and when combined in the formation of words.

*Letters. Independent Sound.**Sound in Combination.*

A — aa — as in *man*, or, when circumflexed, much broader.

B — eb — as in English.

C — ek — always as K in English.

Ch — ekh — an aspirated C, as the Greek X properly pronounced.

D — ed — as in English.

*Dd — edh — as Th in *the* and *whether*.

E — ay — as in *bed*, or, when circumflexed, as *a* in *bade*.

*F — ev — always as V in English.

* Mr. Owen Pughe, in his excellent Dictionary of the Welsh language, made a laudable effort to remove a part of the inconvenience here alluded to, but, unfortunately, without success. The alterations, proposed by Mr. Pughe, and adopted throughout his work, are ç for *ch*, z for *dd*, v for *f*, and *f* for *ff*. Yet, although he has found no followers in print, many, in writing, adopt the first of these emendations, and substitute the Greek δ for the *dd*, whereby much trouble is saved without the risk of creating any obscurity.

*Letters. Independent Sound.**Sound in Combination.*

†Ff—ef — always as F in English.

G — eg — as in *Go*.Ng—eng — as in *long*.

H — aitch— as in English.

I — ee — as in *hid*, or, when circumflexed, as *ee* in *heed*.

L — el — as in English.

*Ll — elh — an aspirated L, to which letter it bears the same relation in sound, as Th to T.

M — em — as in English.

N — en — as in English.

O — o — as in *don*, or, when circumflexed, as in *tone*.

P — ep — as in English.

†Ph— eph — an aspirated P, always as F or Ph in English.

R — ar — as in English.

Rh— arh — an aspirated R, as in *Rheum*.

S — ess — as in English.

T — et — as in English.

Th— eth — an aspirated T, as in *Thought*.U — iu — as *i* in *withy*, or, when circumflexed, as *ee* in *ween*, or more like the French U.W — oo — as *oo* in *good*, or, when circumflexed, as in *boon*.Y — u — as in *myrrh*, also as in *Scythia*, or, when circumflexed, as the circumflexed U.

The (*), prefixed to three of the preceding letters, is employed to mark their incompetency to express the sounds, for which they are used, and the (†), which distinguishes two others, is meant to denote that they are objectionable on another account. With respect to the former, it must be obvious, that neither Dd, F, nor Ll, are properly indicative, even according to the genius of the Roman letters, of the powers assumed. A duplication of D or L can never naturally denote the aspiration of those letters, but can only have the effect of doubling the original sound as in the English words *madder* and *mallard*. Nor is this inconsistency retained because the Roman letters present no alternative: on the contrary the substitution of Dh and Lh, formerly used*, would tend in a great measure to remove the difficulty. It must be ad-

* In the oldest Welsh MSS. no distinction is observed between these letters and the common D and L; but it is left to the reader, from his acquaintance with the language, to make the distinction in sound, where necessary. About the year 1400, or earlier, the practice of doubling the letters, as now in use, was first adopted. But Dr. Gruffydd Roberts, in

mitted, however, that the pronunciation of the last of these letters can not be exactly described by any analogy in the English or other languages *, and that it is only to be perfectly attained by the ear; but in the other instance the English tongue already possesses the sound as above exemplified.

If in the two cases just mentioned there be an evident impropriety in the manner, in which the Roman letters have been adapted to Welsh pronunciation, the liberty, taken with the letter F, must appear still more unwarrantable. For in this instance the Roman V, representative of the sound in all other languages, becomes wholly useless: and we are, in consequence, driven to the additional absurdity of employing the double F, while the single letter is, in every respect, adequate to the purpose. And, with reference to the Ph, as it certainly belonged to the old Bardic Alphabet, it ought perhaps to be retained amongst the modern letters, notwithstanding, that it has the same sound precisely as the Ff, for which letter it is, therefore, on many occasions, improperly substituted. The only instances, indeed, in which Ph seems admissible in Welsh orthography, are the mutations of the letter P and such words, as are avowedly borrowed from the Greek, although this latter use of it may appear somewhat questionable †.

his Welsh Grammar (the first ever printed) published at Milan in 1567, substituted for these double letters D and L with points underneath, in which he was followed by Humphrey Llwyd, William Salesbury, and Roger Smith. Dr. J. D. Rhys, however, in his celebrated Welsh Grammar, printed in 1592, rejected the points, and used Dh and Lh in their stead, as Dr. Powell had also done in his "Historie of Cambria," published eight years before. Dr. Davies, in his Grammar printed in 1621, and afterwards in his Dictionary, which appeared in 1632, made the next alteration by abolishing the Dh and Lh, and restoring the old corruption of the double letters, which, accordingly, continued in use until the publication of the *Archæologia Britannica* by Mr. E. Llwyd in 1707, when an effort was made to reinstate the letters adopted by Drs. Powell and J. D. Rhys. But, although Mr. Llwyd's example was partially followed, neither that nor the later exertions of Mr. Owen Pughe, alluded to in the preceding note, have had the desired effect. The double letters continue to maintain their ground: and the evil has, perhaps, taken too deep a root to be now extirpated.

* The Spanish language has the double L in form, but not in sound. The Spanish pronunciation, as nearly as can be described by any analogy in the English language, resembles that in the word *billiard*, although softer even than that. The sound of the Italian Gl approaches much nearer.

† At least, it would be desirable to introduce as much uniformity as possible in this respect. And, therefore, such words as *corph*, *sarph*,

In addition to the ambiguity, thus occasioned by the misapplication of certain letters in the Welsh Alphabet and the consequent impediment opposed to foreigners in their researches into the language, another disadvantage, previously adverted to, remains to be noticed. For it is, unquestionably, to this abuse that we must ascribe the popular error respecting the ruggedness of our ancient tongue. Strangers, totally unacquainted with its principles and characteristics, and deterred perhaps from investigating them by the very cause here noticed, assume from this uncouth appearance a conclusion quite unwarranted by the premises. But the refutation of this idle notion, engendered in ignorance and fostered in obstinacy, must be reserved for a future occasion. At present it must suffice to remark, that the Welsh tongue, which yields not in copiousness to the Greek nor in energy to the Roman, needs not fear a competition with the Italian in the melodious variety of its sounds*.

In the alteration above suggested in two of the letters, by substituting an *h* for the duplication now used, regard was had more to the analogy of modern tongues than to the highest improvement, of which the case is susceptible. For, although *h* be in effect no more than an aspiration of the letter, with which it is joined, it helps, in general cases, to create those disadvantageous conclusions, which, as recently mentioned, have been so unjustifiably drawn from the modern orthography of the Welsh language. It would, therefore, no doubt, be advisable that, as in other European tongues, all the letter-sounds should be marked by single and distinct symbols. But, from the incapacity of the characters, commonly received in Europe, fully to represent the old Bardic Alphabet, this *desideratum* could only be accomplished by an arbitrary system of accentuation, or by a mode of pointing similar to the Hebrew *dagesh*, both of them practices too much at variance with modern notions to be proposed with any chance of success. The only alternative, then, seems to be the adoption of the letter *h* in the manner suggested, and which, if it possesses no other merit, has at least that of consistency; for we may with as much propriety use *Cc* and *Tt* for *Ch* and *Th* as

&c. that do not come strictly within the exceptions above mentioned, might be spelt with the *ff*.

* This feature of the language will, of course, be examined hereafter; and any one desirous in the mean time of seeing proofs of it, may consult an interesting *Essay* on the subject in the third Volume of the *Cambrian Register*.

the duplication of D and L, now so preposterously employed. The explanations, above offered, of the independent sounds of the Welsh letters, (as far as they can be made intelligible to an English reader) will sufficiently exemplify this.

The following alphabetical scheme is drawn in conformity with the foregoing remarks, and contains not only the alterations, already suggested, but also three letters, which, although not incorporated in the modern alphabet, are on every account as much entitled to a place there as some others, comprised in it, which are only, like these three, aspirations of radical or elementary sounds. These *new* letters (if indeed their frequent occurrence in the language and their adoption in the Bardic Alphabet warrant that term) are printed in Italics by way of distinction. And the writer would add, that he is not conscious of having admitted any fanciful innovations in this scheme, the main object of which, on the contrary, is to present to the English reader as accurate a notion of all the letter sounds in the language as the nature of the English tongue will supply without offering any violence to the peculiar characteristics of the Welsh.

A. B. K. Kh*. D. Dh. E. V. F. G. Ng. *Ngh*. H. I. L. Lh. M. *Mh*. N. *Nh*. O. P. Ph. R. Rh. S. T. Th. U. W. Y.

Independently of the advantages, already proposed by this scheme, it is hoped, that it may be also of service towards illustrating those changes of the initial consonants, which it is intended next to examine. This singular feature of the Welsh tongue is one among the many proofs of its high antiquity: and, although it has been treated grammatically in two or three instances †, it is somewhat extraordinary, that it has not yet undergone a more liberal investigation with reference to the analogies of other an-

* The propriety of this representation may, perhaps, be questioned; but, as the sound of the K is uniform in all languages, it has been selected as preferable to C, and especially in conveying an idea of the pronunciation to an English reader, in whose language the last-mentioned letter has two distinct sounds, whereas the Welsh C has always the force of K. However Kh, although preferable to Ch, is far from expressing the full power of the Welsh letter, which it is meant to represent, and which is the same with the X of the Greeks, as still pronounced by their descendants.

† Among the few grammatical treatises on this subject, the only one, that has done justice to it, is that in Mr. Owen Pughe's Grammar, prefixed to his Dictionary, in which the principle of these mutations is clearly and methodically stated. But it did not enter into Mr. Pughe's plan to offer more than a grammatical illustration of the subject, which is, therefore, still open to a more general discussion.

cient languages and the interesting conclusions, which are to be deduced from such an inquiry. To attempt, with whatever success, to supply this deficiency will be the particular purpose of the next Essay.

* * *

THE WISDOM OF CATWG *.

THE COUNSEL GIVEN BY CATWG THE WISE TO TALIESIN,
CHIEF OF BARDS, WHEN HE WAS HIS SCHOLAR.

Think before thou speakest :

First, what thou shalt speak ;

Second, why thou shouldest speak ;

Third, to whom thou mayest have to speak ;

Fourth, about whom thou art to speak ;

Fifth, what will come from what thou mayest speak ;

Sixth, what may be the benefit from what thou shalt speak ;

Seventh, who may be listening to what thou shalt speak :

Put thy word on thy fingers' ends before thou speakest it, and turn it these seven ways before thou speakest it, and there will never come any harm from what thou shalt say.

Catwg the Wise delivered this to Taliesin Chief of Bards, in giving him his blessing.

There are four original vices : first, anger ; second, lust ; third, laziness ; fourth, fear.

Where one or the other of these may be, there will be found every other evil to spring ; for out of them forcibly grow all other evils in mind and action.

CATWG THE WISE.

THE NULLITIES OF CATWG.

Without a teacher, without instruction ;

Without instruction, without knowlege † ;

Without knowlege, without wisdom ;

Without wisdom, without piety ;

Without piety, without God ;

Without God, without every thing.

* Arch. of Wales, vol. iii. p. 49.

† The original word is, literally, " knowleges ;" but the idiom of the English language does not admit of such a translation.—ED.